

BETTER CITIZENSHIP



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BETTER CITIZENSHIP



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About This Book

This is a book for the young reader, about our rights and duties as citizens of a free country. It is not designed as a text-book on civics, but is an effort to present the subject interestingly in story form.

Two symbolic characters, Vivek and Avivek, are employed to portray the good citizen and the citizen who is slow to awaken to his responsibilities. The young reader will find this book simple and absorbing, and before he realizes it, he will have learnt, along with Avivek, how to be a good citizen of free India.



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I

THE MEANING OF FREEDOM



ONCE upon a time, a Santhal folk tale says, the world was different from what it is today. Life then was one long festival. People harvested not paddy but rice, ready-cooked. The cotton plant yielded finished garments. Boys and girls did not have to go to school; books moved up to the students and spoke out their contents. Houses were not needed, for the blue sky hung low enough to provide a common roof. Want there was none.

People lived in this happy state for ages. As a result, they became lazy. They did not want to work. From the paddy field a man would pluck cooked rice and eat as much as he wanted; but he did not care to wash his hands! It was a bother, washing his hands. He wiped them on his clothes. He threw all over the place the leaf-plates off which he ate. He drove away the books as they moved up to him. Unclean leaves and rags flew about in the wind and defiled God's garden. To cap it all, people also began to quarrel with one another.



God tolerated all this for long. He then warned the people that they would lose their privileges if they misused them. They laughed, and continued to be lazy. They stirred only to quarrel among themselves or to complain to God. The climax came when the people demanded that somebody should turn up every morning to brush their teeth and wash their faces! God lost His patience. "This is the limit", He said. "I will withdraw all the favours that I have bestowed on these undeserving people".

So God commanded : "Let the sky recede."

The sky receded.

"No more cooked rice", He thundered.

Husked rice appeared instead.

"Books, stop moving and talking."

Books became silent.

And God also sent to the world a ruler to govern a people who could not govern themselves.

A Great Truth

Like all folk tales, this tale told among a hill-tribe of Eastern India contains great wisdom. The moment a people become lazy and neglect their duties, they fall. They fall from independence into slavery, from prosperity into poverty.

Our country's history bears this out. Many foreign conquerors have come and ruled over us. This has every time been the result of our own laziness and disunity. In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan, our Vice-President, "India was never conquered from without; she was defeated from within." The British were the last of the foreign conquerors. They established themselves in power some two hundred years ago, and it looked as if they would go on ruling our country for ever. Even some 40 years ago, at the end of the First World War, as your father or grand-father will tell you, it seemed impossible that the British would go away. If they did leave so soon after, it is because Mahatma Gandhi appeared on the scene. He showed us how to be brave and active. Under



his leadership we forgot our quarrels and united to fight for independence. We became a free people on August 15, 1947.

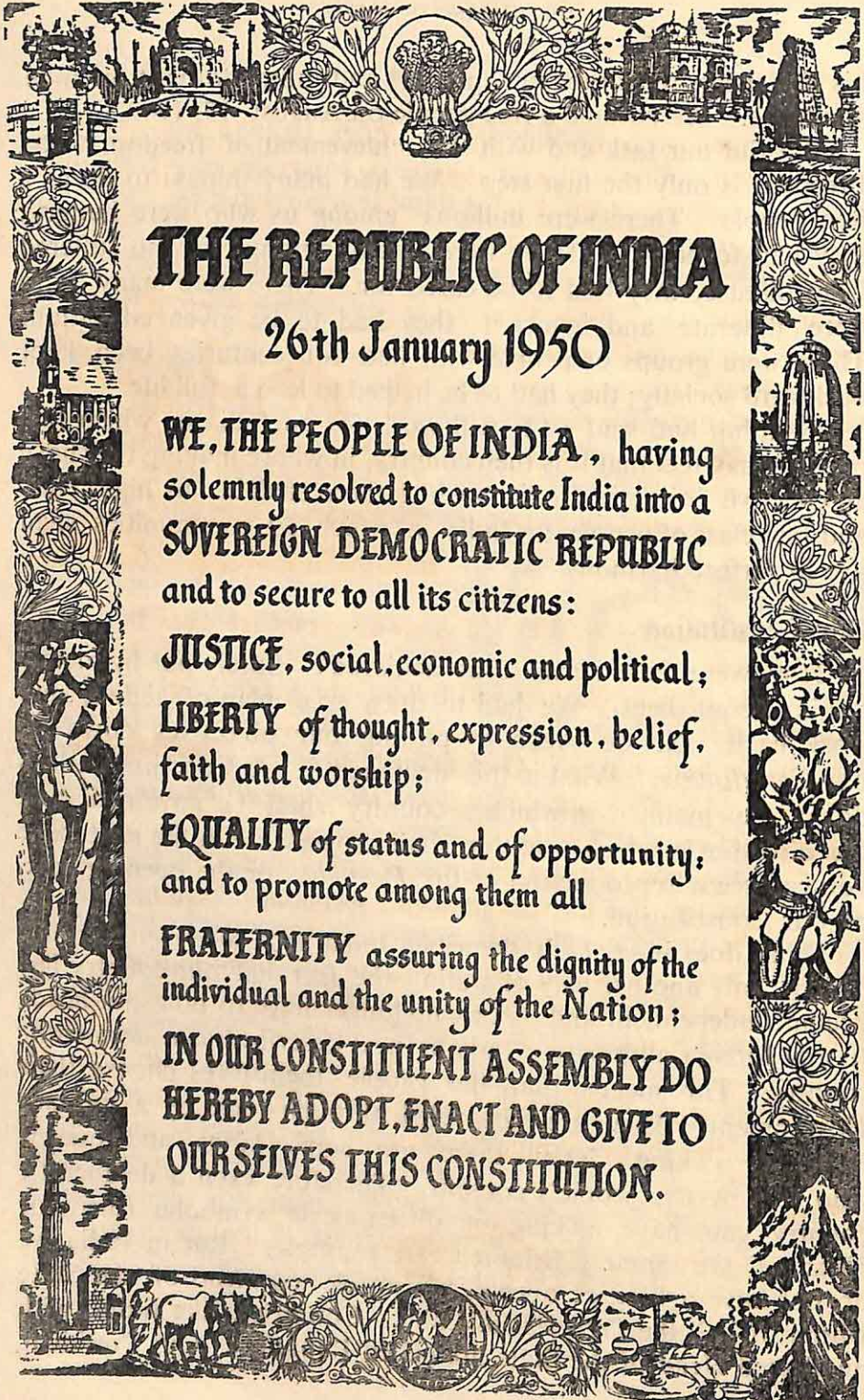
But did our task end with the achievement of freedom? No. Freedom is only the first step. We had many things to do as a free people. There were millions among us who were hungry; they had to be fed. There were many among us who suffered from disease; they had to be cared for. There were many who were illiterate and ignorant; they had to be given education. There were groups of people who had for centuries been kept backward socially; they had to be helped to lead a full life.

Gandhiji had said : "I will work for an India in which the poorest may feel that it is their country, in whose making they have an effective voice; an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people; an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony."

Our Constitution

How were these ideals to be achieved? Surely not by merely talking about them. We had to draw up a plan of action, and work hard. So we began by putting our objectives down in our *Constitution*. What is this document? A Constitution lays down the manner in which a country shall be governed, and the direction in which a nation shall progress. On the next page you can see a reproduction of the *Preamble*, or the opening part, of our Constitution.

What does it say? It describes India as a *sovereign* country. This is only another way of stating the fact that our country has become independent and that we no longer have to bow our heads to any foreign authority. India is next described as a *democratic* country. This means that the people themselves choose their Government. They are not ruled through force by a military leader or a king. Now, there are some kings and queens who rule by the people's consent. Therefore even a democratic country can have a king or queen as its symbolic ruler, or *Head of the State*. Britain is an example. But in India we do not have a king or queen, but an elected Head of the State whom we call the *President* of India. Countries, like India, with an elected Head of the State are called Republics. Our President,



THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA

26th January 1950

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a **SOVEREIGN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC** and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;
LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the Nation;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY DO HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.

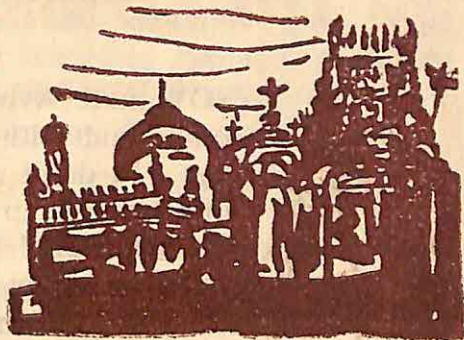
as you know, is Dr. Rajendra Prasad, who does not belong to a royal family but is a common man like any of us.

When you grow up you will no doubt read the whole of the Constitution. You will find that it sets before the Government certain principles which it must follow. These are the *Directive Principles of State Policy*, which may be described as our national *dharma*. These Directive Principles call upon the Government to work for the people's welfare in every way.

Apart from this, our Constitution safeguards the dignity and rights of every individual. Would you be happy if the Government fed you, clothed you and sheltered you, but took away your freedom to follow your religion, to read what you want, speak what you feel, mix with people of your choice and follow the profession you like? Certainly not. These rights are necessary for the growth of the individual's personality. Our Constitution guarantees them to every citizen. They are known as *Fundamental Rights*. If any of the Fundamental Rights is violated either by the Government or by others, one can go to a court of law and claim justice.

Thus we are free citizens of a free Republic. We have every reason to be proud of the status we enjoy today, so different from our condition in the past. We are our own masters. We elect our own representatives to run the Government. Our future is in our own hands.

But a word of caution. We should not imagine that our task ends with electing a Government and that the Government must thereafter do everything for us while we ourselves sit back.



II

MEET AVIVEK



NOW meet Avivek, the Bad Citizen, who likes to find fault with everybody and everything. He says : "I don't understand what good this freedom has done to us. Were we not promised a Welfare State? Where is that welfare? I have waited so many years. What has our Government done for me?"

To this, Vivek, the Good Citizen replies : "Our Government has had to do so many things, not only for you but for all the four hundred million people of our country. You cannot deny that we have made big progress during these years. Some may feel that our progress could be

even bigger and faster. But can any Government solve all problems overnight? It is bound to take some time. How long it takes depends not only on the Government; it also depends on you and on me."

"How does it depend on me?", Avivek asks.

"It depends on you and me because we are not something apart from the country and the Government. We are citizens of India. A Welfare State does not mean that citizens should look to the Government to do everything for them. Welfare is not something that the Government can manufacture somewhere and deliver at our door. We should also learn to help ourselves."

But Avivek is impatient : "If the Government cannot give me what I want, then what is the meaning of freedom?"

Such a reply brings back to mind the people of the Santhal folk tale : the same outlook, the same laziness.



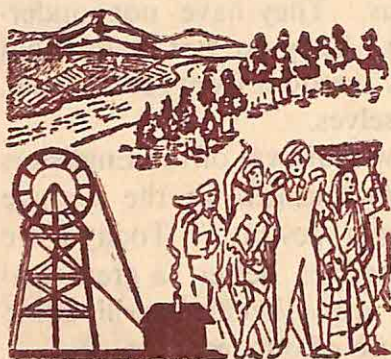
There are many Aviveks among us. They have not understood the real meaning of freedom. They do not realise that what we are enjoying today is not only freedom from foreign rule, but also freedom to do things for ourselves.

Gandhiji once said: "The mere withdrawal of the English is not independence. It means the consciousness in the average villager that he is the maker of his own destiny." Today if we want to clothe, feed and house ourselves better, a great deal depends on ourselves and what we do. Welfare will come through our own efforts and the wise use of our resources.

Our Plans

Fortunately, most of us are not like Avivek. We have worked hard together, since independence, to solve many problems. Through our Five Year Plans we have achieved a great deal and we are trying to achieve much more.

These plans were drawn up by us for our good. Through them we hope to secure a better standard of living for all our people. Most of our people are very poor, although a few, it is true, are very rich. We want, as far as possible, to remove this difference between the rich and the poor. In other words we want to build up a socialist society: a society in which there will be adequate food, clothing and education for all people, and in which each person will be able to develop his abilities to the fullest. Note the underlined words. Socialism does not simply mean distributing equally among our people the food, clothing and other things we produce at present. We have to produce more to make the supplies adequate for all. In a socialist society we must also create equal opportunities for all to develop their abilities. You may know many boys and girls of your own age who do not go to school. This is because their parents are too poor to send them to school, or too ignorant to know the value of education. If these boys and girls could only go to school, many of them might prove to be brilliant students. They would develop their abilities, and the country would profit by their work. So when we say that our objective is to build up a socialist society, we mean all these things.



Obviously, to build a socialist society and improve our standard of living, we must utilise all our resources as fully as possible.

What are our resources? You may say: land, water, minerals, forests and a hundred other things. That is right. But the biggest of the resources of our country is ourselves—we, the people.

In other words, the progress of our country depends on what we, the people, are prepared to do. If we behave like the people of the Santhal tale and refuse to help ourselves we shall lose all that we have gained. Surely we do not want this to happen. We want our country to be great. There is a saying in Sanskrit that the mother and the motherland are more precious than even heaven. We must love our country as dearly as we love our own mother. We are all children of Mother India and we all belong to the same big family of the Indian people whose home stretches from the Himalayas in the north to Kanyakumari in the south. Not only India but any country, for that matter, is what its citizens make of it. The Mahabharata tells us;

Naiva Rajyam Narad Asit

Na dando Naca Dandikah

Dharmanaiva prajah Sarvah

Rakshatisma Parasparam.

(The people flourish not because of the force of law or a law-giver, but because they are guided by Dharma and help one another in co-operation.)



III

THE CITIZEN'S RIGHTS—AND DUTIES



THE people of a free country like ours enjoy a great number of rights. In our country they are guaranteed under the Constitution. These rights, called the *Fundamental Rights*, include the right to protection of your life and property; the right to worship freely according to your religion; and the right to express your views freely on any subject. There are several other such civil rights. Whenever you feel that your rights have been infringed, you have a further right to seek legal remedies.

The most important among the political rights is the right to elect those who will make the laws and rules for governing the country. Who are the makers of these rules and laws? They may be members of the Panchayat in a village or of the municipal committee in a town. They may be members of District Boards or Zilla Parishads. Then, for the State as a whole, there are the members of the Vidhan Sabha (Legislative Assembly), and in some States, of the Vidhan Parishad (Legislative Council) also. Finally, for the entire country, there is Parliament, consisting of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.

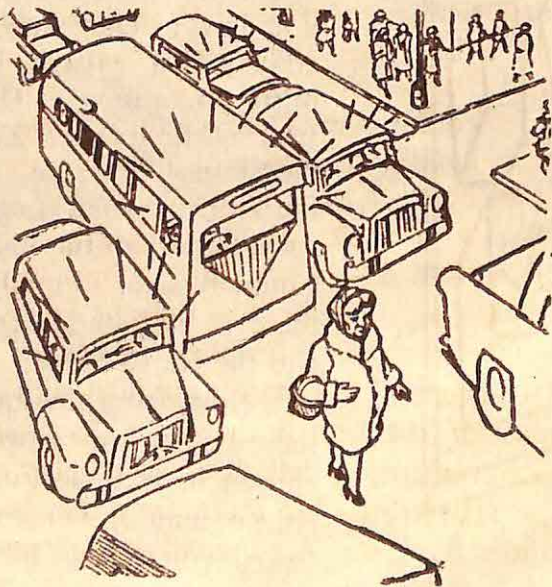
Now, from the Panchayat to Parliament, all these bodies are composed of people who are chosen in free elections in which every adult citizen, man or woman, has the right to vote. Every voter has himself the opportunity to

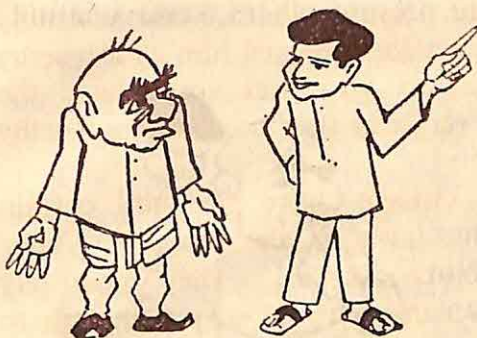
become a member of a Panchayat, District Board, State Assembly or even Parliament, if his fellow citizens regard him as a worthy representative. This naturally means also that voters have the right of rejecting any candidate or party they consider unworthy of their confidence.

In return for these rights, citizens have to fulfil certain duties. They have to obey the laws of the country. They should respect the rights of other citizens. They must pay taxes. They must help the Government to be strong enough to protect their rights. Thus what we give as duties we get back as rights. We cannot claim our rights without performing our duties. There can be no right without a corresponding duty.

But Avivek says : "If I have to perform so many duties and think so much about others, then what is the meaning of freedom to me?"

Avivek has not understood the meaning of liberty. He thinks that freedom means he should be able to do whatever he likes. He is like the old lady who, as portrayed by an English author, walked with her basket right in the middle of the street, expecting the traffic to make way for her. It was pointed out to her that the middle of the road was meant for vehicles and that the pavement was the place for those who went on foot. She replied: "I will walk where I like. Are we not a free people?" It did not occur to the old lady that traffic rules do not take away from anybody's liberty but are only devised for everybody's safety and convenience. If there were no rules of the road everybody would be knocking down everybody else. In order that the freedom of all may be preserved, everyone must use his freedom with due regard for





the rights of others.

For example, take the freedom of speech. We enjoy it because other people have a duty to let us speak even if they do not agree with us. As we expect this duty from others so do others expect it from us. When others speak, we have a duty to let them

speak even if we do not agree with them. We may not listen; that is a different matter. But we cannot prevent them from speaking. This means that our right to speak flows from our duty to let others also speak. In the same way, all our other rights as citizens are linked with our duties as citizens.

This idea is quite new to Avivek. It makes him feel uncomfortable to be told that all his rights carry duties with them. He thinks hard, and it strikes him that the right to vote surely does not carry any duty with it. So he asks: "What duty is there in connection with my right to vote?"

"Why," says Vivek, "voting itself is a duty. If citizens do not care to vote, there will be no elections. Supposing there are no elections, how can the people change the Government if the majority of them are not satisfied with it? In countries where there are no elections, the Government will not be afraid to take away the people's right. Would you like that to happen?"

"Voting, therefore, is a duty. We must choose our representatives carefully, and vote only for those who, we think, will do their best for the country."

Avivek does not give up easily: "What about the right to protection under the law? Do I not enjoy it in any case?"

"No," says Vivek, "the right to protection under the law carries with it the duty to obey the law. How can you expect the Government to protect the lives and property of the citizens if most of them break the law? It would be impossible for the Government, in that case, to employ enough policemen!"

"Therefore, we must obey the law if we expect protection under the law. A good citizen will not only obey the laws of the

country himself but will also try to prevent others from violating them."

"Well," says Avivek with a self-satisfied smile, "I have never broken the laws of the country. So I am a good citizen."

Is he a good citizen just because he has not broken any laws? Not breaking the law is very important, but it is not enough. Would you call someone a good student if he was merely "not stupid"? No, he must be positively intelligent. Similarly, everyone who does not break laws is not necessarily a good citizen. A good citizen is one who works positively for the welfare of society.



A Big Family

A good citizen tries to live a useful life and co-operate with other citizens for the welfare of the community and the country. A country is like a big family. In a family each member has rights and duties. They all depend on one another. A family is happy if its members perform their duties and help one another. We want this big family, our country, to be happy. We want to make it prosperous. Above all, we want it to remain free, and never again fall under foreign rule.

The defence of the country against any attack from outside is, therefore, the foremost among the citizens' duties. Suppose a thief breaks into your house. The police will of course come to your help as soon as they can. But you cannot afford to sit idle till then. You have to defend your life and property with all your strength. Similarly, though we have an army, navy and air force to defend our country, each citizen has the duty to fight the enemy in the event of an attack. We should be prepared to sacrifice everything, even life itself, for preserving the freedom and honour of our motherland. The defence of a country depends not only on its armed forces, but even more on the spirit of the people. A people that will not surrender can never be beaten.

The Fearless Guide

Here is the story of a patriotic citizen. It relates to the time, soon after our country became free in 1947, when Kashmir was invaded by hostile raiders from Pakistan.

Our troops were advancing towards Zojila Pass. They had to cross rugged, mountainous territory. Nobody knew the way, but the pass had to be reached quickly. Otherwise a strategic position would have fallen into the hands of the enemy.

At that crucial moment Kasim, a young Kashmiri, came forward. He volunteered to guide the unit. The troops had good reason to trust Kasim, for he had rescued a wounded soldier from the enemy only a few days earlier.



So they followed him. Braving the enemy's close and continuous fire, Kasim courageously advanced with the troops. He led them on towards the pass. His firm determination and fearlessness enabled our troops to drive away the invaders from Zojila Pass. Kasim's patriotic action has been fittingly recognised by the nation. The President awarded him the Mahavir Chakra in 1955.

Whether it is obeying the law in day-to-day life, or helping to defend the country, we should always put our duty first. Remember what Gandhiji said: "The true source of right is duty. If we all leave our duties unperformed and run after our rights, they will escape us like the will-o'-the-wisp. The more we pursue them the farther will they fly."

No. We do not want to spend our time chasing shadows. We want to preserve our freedom and enrich the life of our country.



IV

GOOD NEIGHBOURS

AKSHAYA KUMAR SINGH, a young student, was on his way to college. Walking along the railway lines he suddenly noticed a gap in the track. He stopped to examine it closely. A dangerous gap caused by the removal of fish-plates! He looked around. There was no human being anywhere in sight. To his great alarm he heard a passenger train rushing down the line.



What could poor Akshaya Kumar do? He was confused, and almost at his wits' end. Only a few more moments, and hundreds of people would plunge into the jaws of death! Then an idea occurred to him. He stood between the lines and waved his hands. But the driver did not seem to notice the signal. The train approached at the same speed. Akshaya lost no time. He took off his coat and began waving it vigorously. This time he caught the eye of the driver. With a piercing screech the engine ground to a halt just in front of the boy, who had not moved an inch from where he stood.

The driver, probably a little annoyed at first, alighted and walked up to the young man who had held up the train. His experienced eye soon noticed the gap in the track. With bated breath he paused for a moment, then walked up to where death had been lying in wait. He turned to the young hero and, in a voice choked with emotion, thanked him profusely. Akshaya returned a broad grin. He had no time for words. The tolling





of the college bell warned him that it was getting late. He hurried off.

Avivek might take this to be a piece of clever fiction. But facts are sometimes stranger than fiction. And this is a fact. It happened on December 21, 1953. The place was Gandhinagar in the Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh, and the stretch of railway track was between the two small stations of Tajpur Dehma and Karimuddinpur.

The country has fittingly honoured the noble sense of duty shown by Akshaya Kumar Singh. The President awarded the Ashoka Chakra, Class III, to the young hero in 1956.

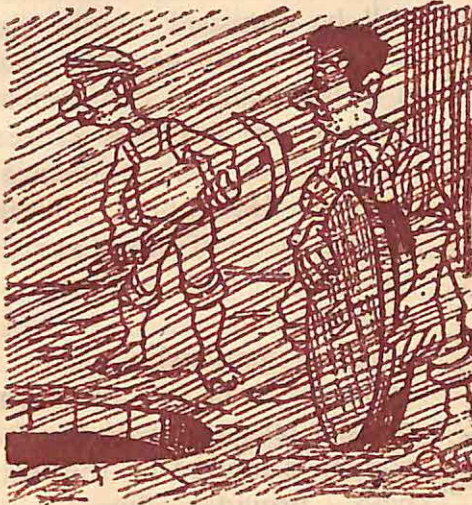
Imagine that Akshaya Kumar Singh had gone away, unconcerned after noticing the gap in the track. A major train accident would have occurred on that fateful December morning. Many women would have been widowed, many children would have been orphaned, many families ruined. All this was averted by the high sense of responsibility and the courage shown by a boy. He was prepared to risk his life in order to save the lives of his fellow citizens.

He proved himself a really good citizen—one who loves his neighbours as he loves himself. He was moved not by any consideration of personal gain but by a supreme sense of duty to his fellow human beings. This is the motive force of a good citizen. No one would have punished the boy if he had ignored the breach in the railway track and gone about his own business. For all we know, others had noticed it earlier and passed on, without caring.

The breach itself might have been caused by some persons stealing the iron fish-plates. Such wicked people do exist, and they are a danger to society. That is why they are called *anti-social* elements.

A Study in Contrast

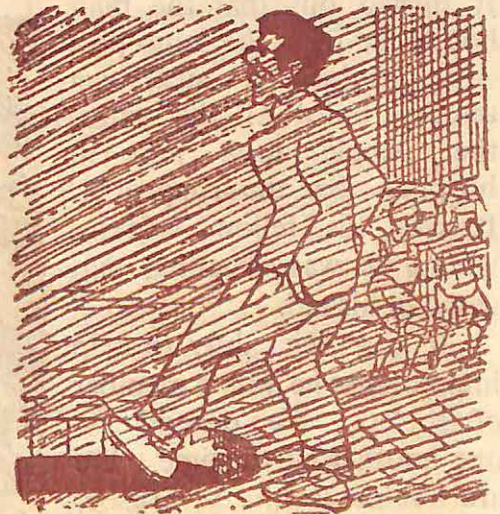
A newspaper reported recently that the municipal authorities in New Delhi were much worried by the large number of thefts



of manhole covers, the iron lids covering the passage to drainage channels. "Not only does the replacement of the covers impose a heavy financial burden", the report said, "but the manholes left uncovered are dangerous to pedestrians and animals, particularly during the rainy season. A survey conducted early this year in a New Delhi municipal area showed that 100 or more covers were being stolen every month."

It costs more than Rs. 20 to replace a single manhole cover. The New Delhi Municipal Committee would have to spend Rs. 2,000 every month if it wanted to keep all the manholes covered. You can see what a big burden this is on the municipality. From where do municipal committees get the money to replace stolen manhole covers? From the people, of course, in the form of taxes. How much better it would be if this money could be spent on building schools or hospitals! This apart, imagine the danger to which citizens are exposed by the theft of manhole covers. Those who steal them are bad citizens. They are anti-social.

Contrast the conduct of the boy who averted a train accident and saved the lives of hundreds of people, with the conduct of those who lift manhole covers. The former, prompted by his duty to society, risked his life to save others; the latter endanger the lives of others so that they themselves can profit.



It is true that these thieves will be punished under the law if they are caught. But it is not fear of punishment that should make a citizen desist from such anti-social activity. He should himself have a sense of duty towards the safety and welfare of others.

If a man who steals a manhole cover for the iron, or cuts telegraph wire for the copper is injured in the act, who provides him with

medical aid? It is the community, you may be sure, through the public health service.

The Bulb-remover

The following incident was reported some time ago from Calcutta. A man was found lying injured under a lamp-post in a public park. A sympathetic crowd gathered around. Soon somebody discovered half a dozen electric bulbs lying nearby. It turned out that the man had fallen from the lamp-post whilst trying to steal yet another bulb! All the same, the people took him to hospital. See the irony of it! It was his fellow citizens, whom he was cheating, that came to his aid.

It was their duty to help him because he was a member of society. We depend on one another all the time. We are not like Robinson Crusoe, who lived all alone on a desert



island. We have to work together to satisfy our thousand and one needs. Even Avivek cannot imagine for a moment that he does not depend on anybody.

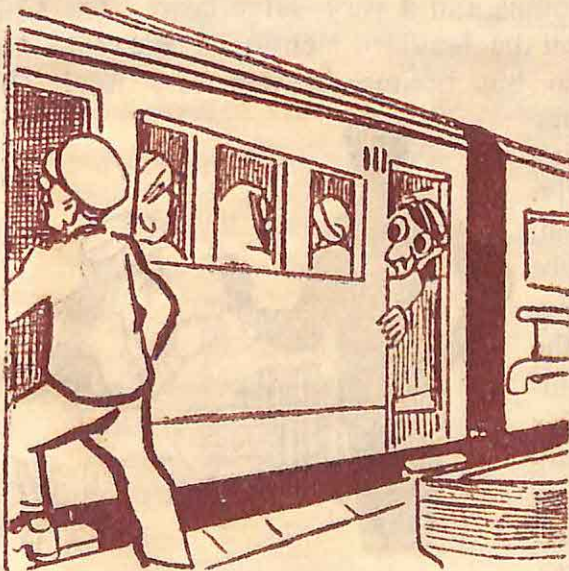
It is worth repeating that it is not fear of punishment that should prevent people from doing harm to others. A good man, a man of character, will regard it as morally wrong to do anything that is anti-social. To a good citizen, the voice of his own conscience is more powerful than the fear of punishment. If we want to be good citizens, we should simply do what we know and feel to be the right thing.

It is, after all, impossible to prepare a charter of duties with prescribed punishments for the violation of each. Honesty, truthfulness, politeness, and consideration for the sick, the poor and the aged—these are good qualities we must cultivate, law or no law. These noble rules of conduct may not have the sanction of a law passed by Parliament. There may be no threat of punishment if you do not strictly follow these rules of conduct. But if you do not follow them you will not be regarded by others as a decent person. You will not enjoy the respect of society.

Honesty, truthfulness and so on may, therefore, be described as the unwritten *moral law* of society. It is this moral law which binds individuals together like the beads of a necklace. This law

covers every human activity. It is so all-embracing that it cannot be set down completely in the shape of laws. But every piece of legislation is based on this moral law. Citizens must be governed by this moral law, even more than by fear of punishment for breaking the laws made by Parliament.

Take a simple example. Ticketless travel



on the railways is an offence punishable under law. Yet thousands of people indulge in this unlawful practice every day. More than 3,60,000 people travelled without tickets on the Eastern Railway alone during the three months of June, July and August in 1957. The loss of revenue to the railways, as a result of such ticketless travel, can be easily imagined. Ultimately who bears this loss? The law-abiding people, the good citizens of India. The railways are ours; and we run them for our own benefit. Their profits are used for extending the railway system to new areas, and for making railway travel more comfortable. Is it not then wicked for any of us to dodge payment of our railway fare? Ticketless travel is an example of cheating society by evading payment. There are other bad citizens who are ready to pay money—but again in order to cheat society. They will, for example, offer bribes to gain something to which they are not entitled. The offer of bribes and their acceptance is called *corruption*. Both the giver and the taker of a bribe are equally guilty.

Honest persons will resist any sort of bribe or temptation that selfish people might put in their way to gain undue favours. Some time ago, there was an interesting incident in a district town. A Collector, who had been newly transferred to the place, was looking for accommodation. A landlord offered him a big bungalow with many rooms and a very large lawn. The Collector was surprised when the landlord mentioned the rent—not because it was very high but because it was very low! The Collector suspected that the landlord was trying to bribe him indirectly. Being an honest citizen, and not wishing to place himself under an obligation to the landlord, the Collector asked the Municipality to assess the fair rent of the house. The assessment came to almost double the figure the landlord had named. The



Collector insisted on paying the fair rent and thus disappointed the scheming landlord.

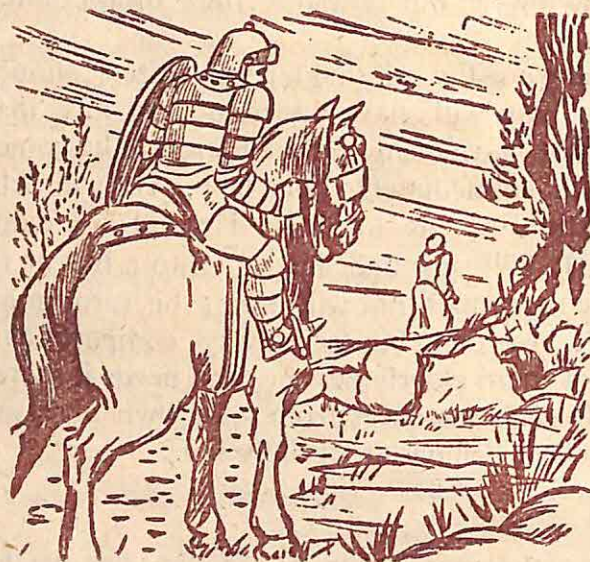
It is impossible to make a list of all that a good citizen should do in everyday life. But you will have understood by now that a good citizen will do what is right in every situation. If he comes across a sick man he will immediately offer help. He will help to maintain the sanitation of his locality. He will not damage public property. He will not fight his way into a bus or to the ticket counter at a cinema hall, but will await his turn in an orderly queue. Inside a crowded bus or railway compartment, he will offer his own seat to an elderly person who needs it more. You can easily multiply such instances from your own observations of selfish and unselfish behaviour in daily life.

A Golden Rule

For the good citizen, the golden rule is: "Love your neighbour as yourself." This is the same as saying, "Treat others as you would like them to treat you." A good citizen is a good neighbour in the largest sense of the word. Who is a good neighbour? Jesus Christ was once asked this question by a Jewish lawyer. Jesus replied with this story.

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothes and wounded him and departed, leaving him half dead. By chance there came a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise, a Levite (a priest's assistant)





who came the same way, looked at him and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan (a person from Samaria, a country hostile to the Jews) happened to come where the man lay, and when he saw him he had pity on him, went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on him oil and wine. And the Samaritan

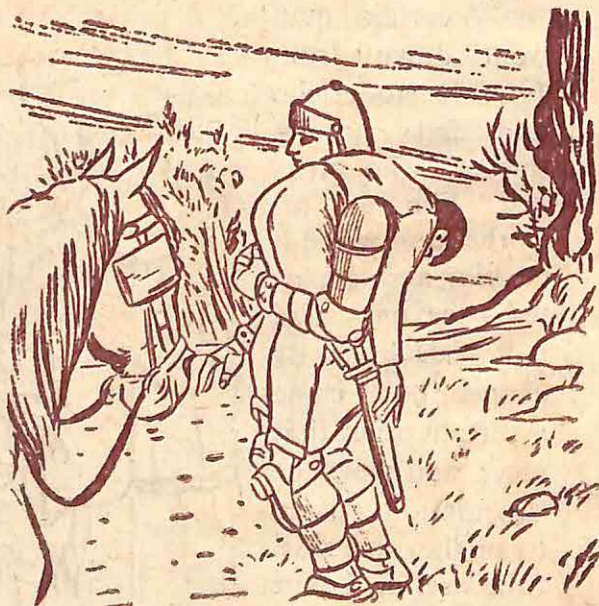
set him up on his own beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And in the morning, when he left, he took out two coins and gave them to the landlord saying: 'Take care of him; and whatever you spend more, when I come again I will repay you.'

"Which of these three", Jesus asked, "was neighbour to him that fell among the thieves?"

Lawyer: "He that showed mercy on him."

Jesus: "Go then and do likewise."

This is a wonderful story of good neighbourliness. The Samaritan, though he belonged to an enemy race, was good-neighbourly enough to care for a wounded man.



How many of us act like the Good Samaritan ? Do we care for the poor, the sick and the wounded among our own countrymen, or even among the people of our own town or village ? We must ask ourselves this question and answer it honestly. If we do so, each one of us will realise how much more we should do in order to be good citizens.



V

YOUNG CITIZENS

MANY boys and girls think that just because they are young, they have no duty to society. They are mistaken. Citizenship is not something that comes tomorrow. It is with us today. It is true that young people do not have certain legal or political rights, like the right to vote in an election, for instance. These rights will come to them as they grow older. Meanwhile, they have to prepare themselves to make good use of these rights. They must learn to grow up as good citizens.

Some boys and girls, unfortunately, behave at times like bad citizens. For example, look at the 'fun' that Master Avivek garik and certain of his friends like to have. They board a bus and occupy the back seats. Master Avivek quietly takes out a razor blade and rips up a piece of rubber from the cushioned seat. Then the next boy borrows the blade and does the same thing. By the time they all alight from the bus, many of the seats are badly damaged. Obviously Master Avivek and his friends have a wrong idea of fun. If they are not peeling off the cushions from bus seats, they pull out their penknives in the class room and carve their names on benches, desks and blackboards.

Master Avivek and his like should realise that damaged bus seats are uncomfortable not only for other passengers but also for themselves. Also, that replacement of damaged bus seats or school benches

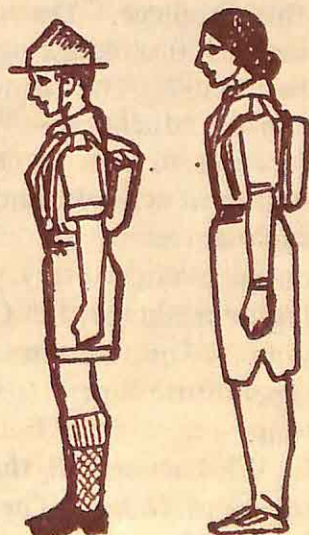


costs money, and that the money comes ultimately from the pockets of their own parents.

As students, the most important duty of the young is to learn as much as they can and thus equip themselves for useful citizenship. They must develop a sense of discipline, which is the foundation of character. Citizens of character are a nation's greatest asset.

Even while they are studying at school or college, young people can learn how to be of service to society. By joining the Social Service League of their school or college, the National Cadet Corps, the Scouts or Girl Guides, they can acquire discipline and learn how to help others. Students can spend some of their leisure hours, especially during vacations, on constructive work of one type or another. Most of our students, unfortunately, look down upon manual work. They will, however, understand the dignity of labour if they take part in constructive work. Gandhiji said that university students should do social service for at least a year before they are awarded their degrees. He suggested this because it would develop a spirit of service in our young men and women.

Far from thinking in terms of service, some students like to go on strike on one pretext or another. Take Master Avivek for example. All play and no work has made him an idle boy. To him, therefore, every examination is very difficult. He has tried more than once to organise a strike against "stiff" examination papers. Besides, there is Neta Junior, who is a clever boy but is more interested in politics than in his studies. He is a budding orator, and fancies himself as a big political leader in the making. He, too, tries to organise a strike in the school whenever there is some political trouble in town. There is



little really in common between Master Avivek and Neta Junior. But they are friends just because both love strikes. Between them they have brought a bad name to their high school.

What is wrong with Neta Junior is not his interest in politics. It is, on the contrary, good to study and discuss how the country should be governed, what the resources of our land are, and in what way we can utilise these resources to quicken the progress of our country. Neta Junior's interest should, therefore, lead him to more study, not less; certainly not to shouting and marching in processions. For a student to go on a political strike is as ridiculous as for grown-up people to be playing marbles.

Every student should realise that the opportunity for study is a privilege. Because of the absence of schools in many villages, or because the parents are too poor to pay the school fees, thousands and

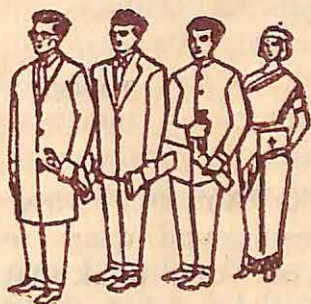


thousands of boys and girls do not, unfortunately, enjoy this privilege. Do you know that only about 40 out of every 100 children aged between 6 and 14 attend schools in our country? That is why the Government is spending all that it can on education. What students pay by way of fees is only a fraction of the expenditure which the Government bears. This is true of schools, and even more so in the case of colleges. For each university student the Government spends about Rs. 300 on an average every year. In the case of a student of engineering or medicine, the Government spends more than Rs. 1,200 per year. For certain post-graduate studies, the Government's expenditure per student is as high as Rs. 8,000 per year.

Who meets all these expenses? It is the people, the taxpayers of India. They spend this money because it is their duty to provide education to the country's children. Is it not, then,

the duty of students, in their turn, to make good use of this privilege of education ?

It is, after all, on the students of today that the country places all its hopes for tomorrow. As you know, more and more hospitals, roads, factories and dams have been coming up in the country. The Government has planned to build even more in the coming years. How will the hospitals work unless boys and girls study hard and train themselves to become doctors, nurses and compounders ? How can more roads, factories and dams be built unless the students of today become good engineers and scientists ?



VI

TASKS BEFORE FREE INDIA

TODAY the word 'untouchability' may sound queer to many of you. You would think that touching or not touching somebody is a matter of one's personal choice. You do not know of any child being kept out of a school because he or she belongs to an 'untouchable' family.

But this was not always so. For many, many centuries, millions of our countrymen were treated as 'untouchables'. Not only were they themselves untouchable, but even water or food which they touched was supposed to become unclean. They had to live in separate colonies, away from the so-called 'touchables'.

Many social reformers tried to put an end to this inhuman system. Finally, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, our people gave up this unjust and evil practice of untouchability. Harijans (the name given by Gandhiji to our formerly untouchable brethren) are now treated as equal to others in every way. Our Constitution has abolished untouchability for ever. Its practice in any form is now punishable under law.

This is one of our greatest achievements after freedom. But there still remain many other social evils we have to fight and eradicate. For example, *communalism*, *casteism*, and *linguism*. What does communalism mean? It means that you like

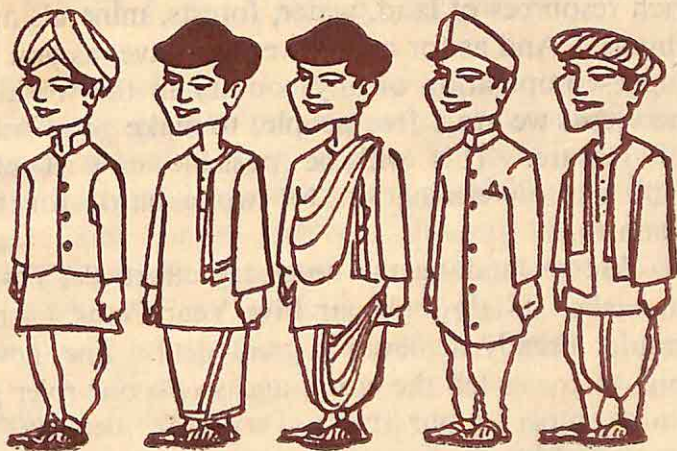


a person who belongs to your own religion even if he is a bad man, and dislike anyone belonging to another religion even if he is a good man. Similarly, casteism means a narrow liking for people of your own caste and dislike of people belonging to other castes. Linguism is a narrow liking for your own mother tongue and those who speak it.

As you know, what religion or caste we belong to, or what language we speak at home, depends on the accident of birth. Is it not wrong, then, to make religion, caste or language the basis of our likes and dislikes ?

Gandhiji taught us to respect each religion for what is good in it. Hindus and Muslims, Sikhs and Parsees, Jains and Buddhists—all form the big family of India. Gandhiji also taught us to regard all

human beings as equal, and to give up the idea of high caste and low. What is true of religion and caste is equally true of language and State. Those who speak one language are in no way better or worse, simply for that reason, than those who speak another



language. Does not the great poet Rabindranath Tagore tell us in our national song that the speakers of Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi and so on are all children of the same Mother India?

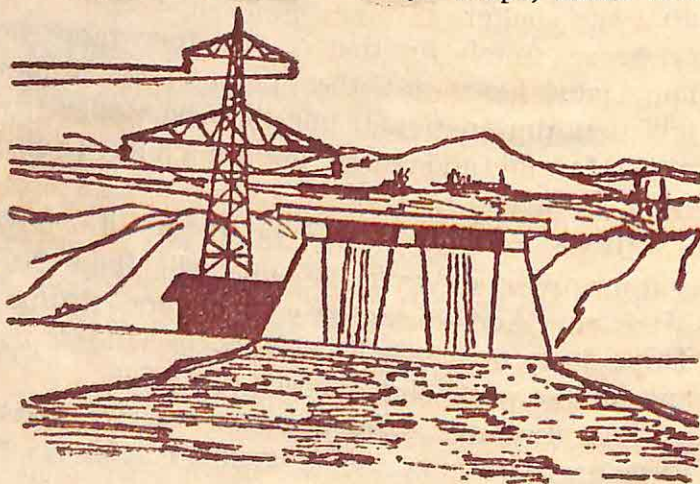
“If we are big, so will be India; if we grow little-minded and narrow in outlook, so also will India be”, said our Prime Minister. And we can only be big and strong if we are united. This is very necessary for the progress of our country as a whole and for the well-being of each part of it.

We are now a free people and we can no longer say that foreigners are suppressing us and keeping us poor. Those days

are gone. We are now our own masters, and it is left to us whether to work hard and become prosperous, or do nothing and remain poor. You know that the countries of Europe suffered terrible damage during the Second World War. Their young men were killed, their houses were bombed, their land and factories were destroyed. Yet, within ten years of the end of the war, many of these countries changed beyond recognition. They not only repaired the damage caused by war, but some of them became more prosperous than they were before the war ! This was due to the hard work put in by their citizens, who regarded it as their patriotic duty to rebuild their motherland.

If we follow this excellent example we can become as prosperous as any other nation. Fortunately, Nature has given us rich resources of land, water, forests, minerals and so many other things. And as for manpower, we have, as you know, the second biggest population of any country in the world. It is up to us, now that we are a free people, to make good use of the blessings of Nature. This will be possible only if all of us have the will and determination to work hard for the good of the country.

Are we making the necessary effort ? Yes, we have begun to make it—through our Five Year Plans. And we have, as a result, already achieved a great deal. The new townships and big factories tell the story, and so do our river projects. As you know, most of our rivers every year destroy crops, cattle and human lives when they are in flood. Now, thanks to the artificial hills called dams which we have built across them, some of these rivers have been brought under control. The dams store



water during the flood season and the water is taken out during the dry season to irrigate land which used to be barren before. Thus, food crops like rice and wheat now stand on thousands of acres where only shrubs and weeds used to grow.



Thanks to the factories which we have built, we are now producing more cloth for our people, making more cement for the construction of houses, manufacturing engines to draw our railway trains, building ships, and producing so many other things that we had to get from abroad before. Through these and other projects, we are providing employment to more and more of our people, many of whom were formerly compelled to remain idle and poor. All this is being done under our Five Year Plans.

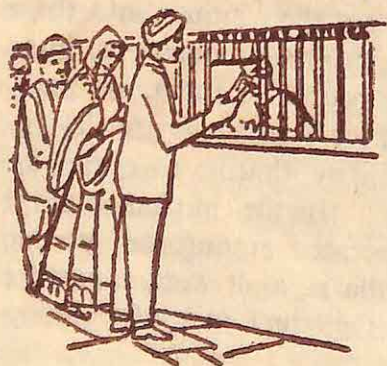
Partners in India, Ltd.

While walking through the bazar you must have noticed the signboards above the shops—"A & B, Ltd." or "X & Y, Ltd." You know that these are names of companies in which A and B, or X and Y are partners. They have put their money into these companies and they will share their profits. Imagine a huge company of which all of us, the entire people of India, are partners! That is exactly how it is. The Five Year Plans are designed to bring prosperity to this huge company, that is, to ourselves. In the words of our Prime Minister, "In the implementation of the Plans a feeling should be generated among the people that each man, woman and child in India is, as it were, a partner in 'India, Limited', jointly engaged in the great task of building a new India."

"How can I participate in this?" Avivek asks. "I cannot build a dam; nor can I build a factory." But our plans are not all dams and factories. In our vast country with more than 5,00,000 villages, there are so many useful things to be done which require no special knowledge or training. Everybody can co-operate in such work. For instance, in a village which suffers every year from the overflow of a nearby river, cannot the people get together and build a simple mud-bank to save their fields? Do they have to wait for the Government to build a simple road to connect the village with the nearest town? Can they not dig a channel to bring water to their fields from a near-by tank?



Even for the building of dams and factories, it is not only engineers and technicians who are wanted. For one engineer, there have to be fifty or a hundred ordinary workers if his fine designs are to be turned into brick and mortar. The ordinary worker's labour is in its own way as valuable as the specialist's skill. Therefore, if we do not happen to be experts in some field or other, that is no reason for regret. Nor is it an excuse for saying, like Avivek, that we can do nothing to help the country through the Plan.

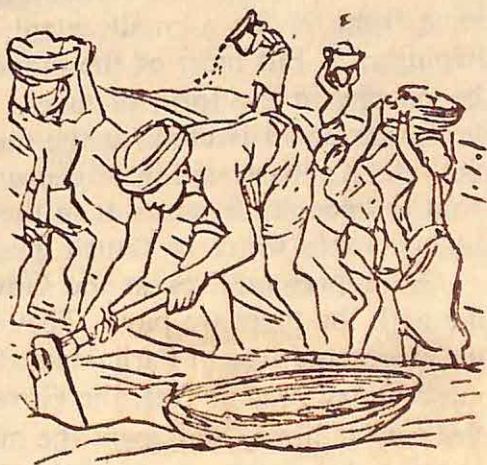


Even if people like Avivek dislike manual work they can still help in other ways. If they have money—and people with money usually dislike working with their hands—they can help by offering cash instead of labour. Some of them may not be prepared to offer either. Even such people can help by *lending* their money to the Government, which requires as much money as it can find for carrying out the Plan.

Thus, from the ordinary peasant in the village to the richest man in the city, all of us can contribute to our country's progress. But the rich are very few, and it is on the millions of common people in the villages that our progress mainly depends. As we saw earlier, there are many ways in which they can improve their conditions of life by their own efforts. And the Government is there to help them in those things that they cannot directly do themselves. For instance, villagers can build a *kaccha* road, but surely they will face difficulties if there is a *nullah* on the way to be bridged. But if they are prepared to do as much as they can, the Government engineer is there to help them complete the job. If the initiative of the people and the resources of the Government are thus combined, then there is no limit to the improvements we can make in our life. We can dig more wells; we can build roads; we can dig tanks and construct canals; we can build more schools and hospitals. It is only in this way, through the people's self-help *plus* Government assistance, that we can create a new and prosperous life in our villages. This is the way of *Community Development*, of which you have no doubt heard.

Community Development

This is not a new idea. As you know, Gandhiji attached the greatest importance to rural reconstruction. Efforts at village uplift had been made in the past in many parts of the country. But a well planned and systematic programme of rural improvement began only in 1952, under the name of Commu-



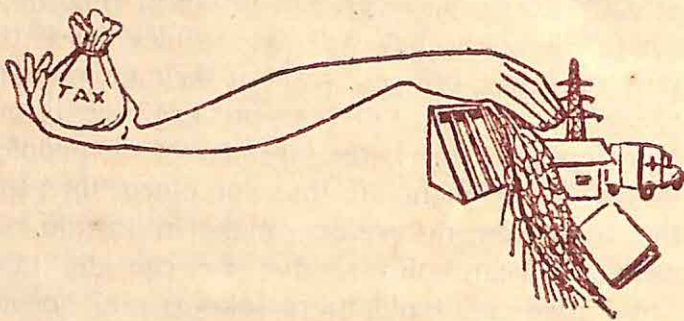
nity Development. The Government rightly chose October 2, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, for launching this great programme.

This programme already covers several thousand villages of India. By 1963 every single village will be covered. But the starting of the programme in a particular area is only the

beginning. The Government will take care of that. It is up to the people themselves to get the maximum benefit from the programme by offering their labour and pooling their resources.

Need for Taxes

We have just talked of the Five Year Plans. The Third Plan is much bigger than the Second, which itself was double the size of the First. Each Plan makes the condition of the common man better than be-



fore. He will have more opportunities of employment. He will have more food, vegetables, cloth, sugar, oil and other necessities of life. There will be more houses and schools and hospitals.

Now all this costs a lot of money. Where does all this money come from ? To a small extent, other friendly countries are helping us. But most of the money has to come from ourselves, the people, in the form of taxes. The money thus collected by the Government is used for the maximum advantage of the people. As Kalidasa said in *Raghuvamsa* : "The State collects tax from the people to return it in the form of many benefits, just as the sun takes water to return it a thousandfold".

Our representatives in the Government cannot do what they like with the taxes we pay. They have to account to us, through our representatives in Parliament, for all the expenditure. Before our country became free, the Government collected taxes in whatever way it liked, and spent the money in whatever way it liked.

How the people resented this is shown in a folk song of the Maikal Hills in Madhya Pradesh :

"To pay the cattle tax, we have to sell a cow;
To pay the forest tax we have to sell a bull;
To pay the land tax, we have to sell a buffalo;
How are we to get our food ?

Government makes no difference
Between the rich and the poor."

See the wisdom of these simple folk. They were right in asking that more should be taken from the rich than from the poor. That is exactly the policy now of the Government of free India. In addition to certain taxes which all have to pay, there are special taxes on those who earn a large salary every month, or who own a lot of property. The richer a man is, the more he has to pay. This is only right, because the more fortunate should help the poor. A good citizen will honestly pay all the taxes

he is called upon to pay, because the Government needs money to improve the condition of the common man.



Tax Evaders

Do all citizens perform this duty? Most of us do, but there are quite a few who evade it. They are experts at tax evasion. When the income-tax officer visits them,

they hide away their real account books and present false accounts.

Such people are anti-social, just like the man who steals the covers of manholes or removes the electric bulbs from street lamps. Crores of rupees are lost by the Government every year on account of tax evasion by Aviveks. Some say that the loss every year is more than 100 crores of rupees ! Imagine how much can be done with such a large sum of money for the good of our people !

Contrast the behaviour of the Aviveks with that of a certain good citizen who offered to pay more than the Government asked of him. Recently the Allahabad Municipality fixed a certain sum as



the value of a house, for the purpose of assessing the tax on its owner. But the owner felt that this house was really worth more. He named a much higher figure as the true value of his house, thus making himself liable to pay more. Would you like to know who this citizen is? He is Shri Jawaharlal Nehru. The house in question is Anand Bhavan in Allahabad.



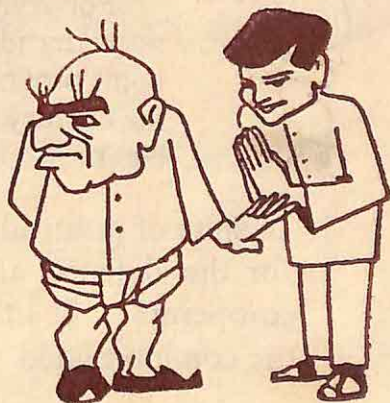
VII

AVIVEK CAN CHANGE

IN every society, there are Aviveks who think only of their rights and not of their duties. It is the duty of Viveks to put them on the right path, by explaining to them the need for good citizenship in the interests of everyone, including the Aviveks themselves.

It is not as if Aviveks cannot be reformed. They may pay heed to good counsel, for instance, and mend their ways. Or they may change as the result of their own experience. Take the particular Avivek we have been discussing. The latest report about him is very encouraging. It seems that his own experience has taught him to become a good citizen.

It happened like this. Some time ago, Avivek refused permission for the construction of a road across his land to link his native village with the main road leading to the neighbouring town. The villagers had voluntarily undertaken the construction of the link road. They had to leave it unfinished at the boundary of Avivek's field. Under the leadership of Vivek they went to Avivek in the city, and tried to explain to him the need for a road to connect their village with the main road. But Avivek flatly refused to yield.



Later, Avivek happened to come to his village home for a holiday. Suddenly his wife fell ill. She had to be taken to the hospital in the neighbouring town. But how? Even carts, let alone cars, could drive only up to a mile away from the house. There was no connecting path to the main road. Avivek did

not know what to do. Vivek and his friends, however, came to his rescue. They made a stretcher and carried Avivek's wife all the way to the main road, from where she was able to reach the hospital in a car. She soon got well.

When Avivek fetched his wife back from the hospital, he was a different man altogether. He surprised everyone by announcing that the link road could, after all, be built across his field. He did not stop at that, but offered to help



in the construction of the road. Avivek himself carried the first basket of earth on his head. Hope and pride shone in his face. The villagers were delighted at this change of heart. Everybody worked with enthusiasm, and so the dream of a link road for the village became a reality.

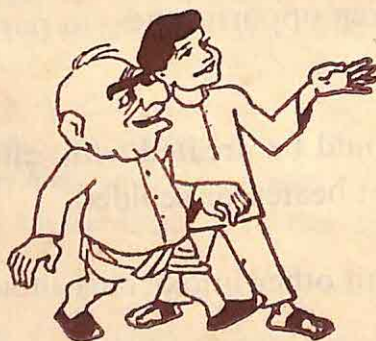
For Avivek, and for all of us, too, there is no better ideal to follow than the following 15-point programme of good citizenship placed before the country by our Prime Minister, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru :



1. In spite of political differences, everyone should unite for the defence and well-being of the country, and co-operate with others to implement programmes for the common good.
2. The unity and good of the nation should be given first importance, and people should, therefore, rise above differences of caste, creed, language and State, and think more of the country as a whole.
3. Violence of any kind must be shunned. Violence creates hatred and is disruptive.

4. Religion is meant to raise an individual and to make him tolerant of others. Narrow prejudices and intolerance do not create respect for one's own religion in the eyes of others. One should honour not only one's own religion but the religions of others also.
5. We should aim at equality of treatment and avoid feelings of high and low, touchable and untouchable.
6. We should aim at becoming good citizens, subordinating self-interest and aiming at the common good.
7. Women should be treated with respect and as comrades. They should not be kept in *purdah* or seclusion, but given opportunities to participate in national activities.
8. Children should be treated with affection and gentleness and not beaten or scolded.
9. Liquor and all other intoxicants should be avoided.
10. Adulteration of foodstuffs and other articles must be prevented.
11. Village and cottage industries should be encouraged and, as far as possible, *khadi* should be used.
12. The giving or accepting of bribes is bad both for the giver and taker, and must be vigorously dealt with.
13. The house, street and village or town should be kept neat and clean.

14. We should try to understand the great developmental work that is going on in the country and help to implement it.
15. Manual labour should be respected and everyone should endeavour to do some form of constructive manual work.



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